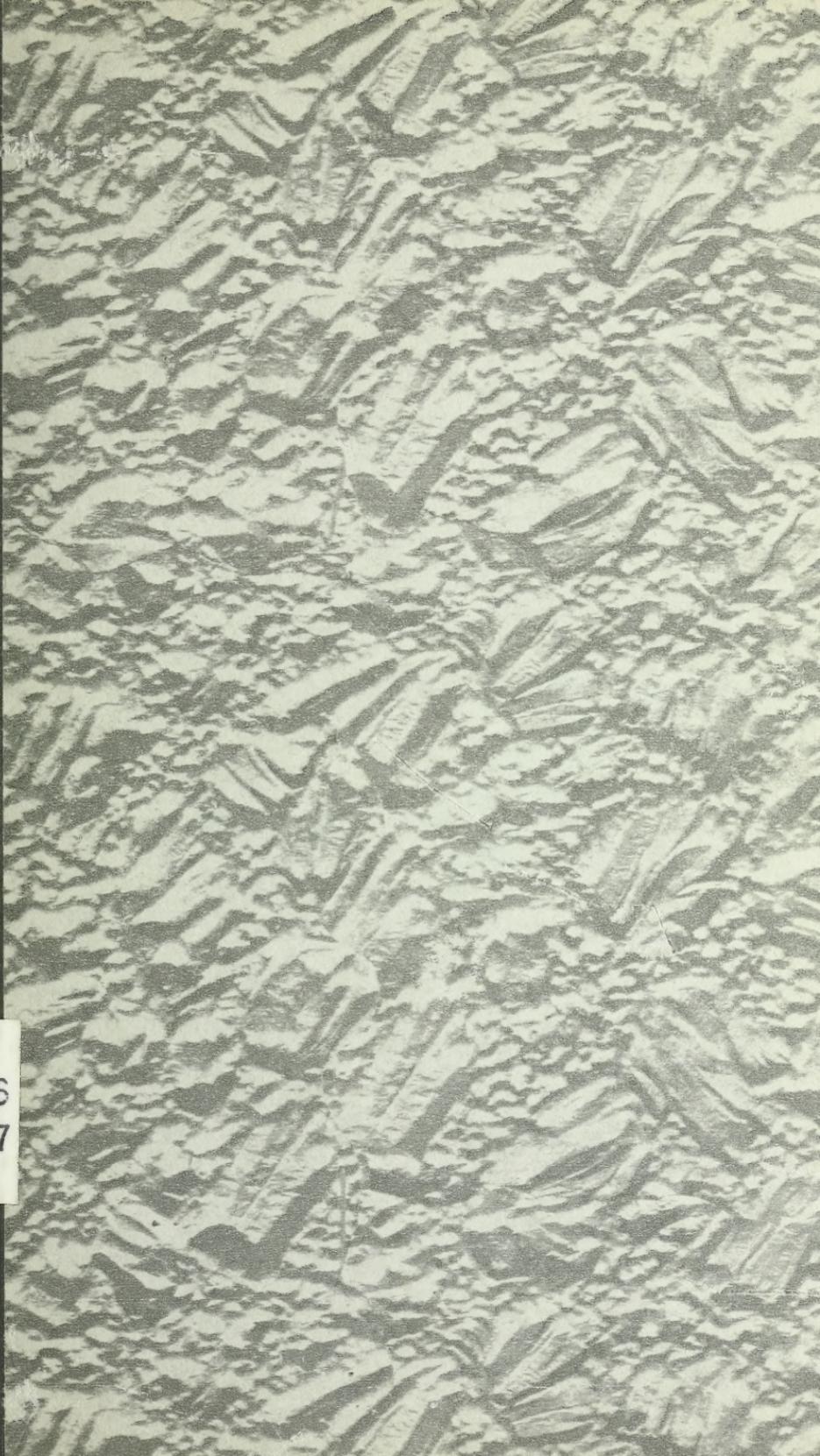


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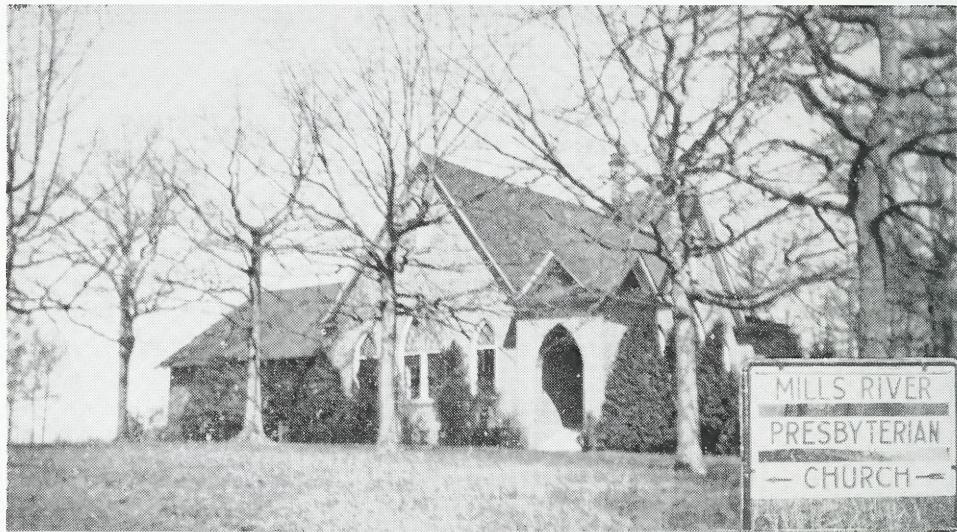
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MILLS RIVER  
PRESBYTERIAN  
— CHURCH —

# THE MILLS RIVER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

HORSE SHOE, NORTH CAROLINA

BY  
J. BRUCE FRYE

*Published 1959 by*  
THE MILLS RIVER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
HORSE SHOE, N. C.

## A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

*For assistance in the preparation of this History of the Mills River Presbyterian Church thanks are due the following:*

Dr. T. H. Spence, Jr. and his staff at the Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, Montreat, N. C.; the R. S. Barnett family for providing many materials of historical significance; the personal records of the late Mr. F. A. Bailey, former Clerk of Session; Mr. and Mrs. L. L. Burgin, and Mr. J. Trigg Brittain, who recounted many instances, and clarified others; my wife, and my mother-in-law, who assisted in the preparation of the manuscript; and the members of the church who indulged my lack of pastoral visitation in order that this history could be written.

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
Chronology of Ministers .....	6
Chapter 1 Camp Meeting Time .....	7- 8
Chapter 2 Birth of a New Church .....	9-12
Chapter 3 War Years, 1861-1865 .....	13-16
Chapter 4 Struggle of Reconstruction .....	17-19
Chapter 5 Turn of the Century .....	20-25
Chapter 6 Rev. William Samuel Hutchison .....	26-29
Chapter 7 Last Two Decades .....	30-35

## CHRONOLOGY OF MINISTERS

The Rev. Jacob Hood (New School) .....	1859-1864
The Rev. George Dickinson Parks .....	1859-1863
The Rev. J. C. Carson—Temporary Supply .....	1864- and 1869-1872
The Rev. W. H. Davis .....	1876-1878
The Rev. Stephen Taylor Martin .....	1878-1884
The Rev. Frank Dean Hunt .....	1889-1892
The Rev. E. A. Sample .....	1892-1896
The Rev. J. L. Wicker—Stated Supply .....	1896-1899
The Rev. Hinton Raleigh Overcash .....	1899-1901
The Rev. L. L. Carson—Temporary Supply .....	1901-1902
The Rev. Charles Connor Brown .....	1902-1906
The Rev. William H. Davis—Stated Supply .....	1907-1914
The Rev. William Samuel Hutchison .....	1917-1920 1923-1940
The Rev. C. B. Ratchford—Temporary Supply .....	1940-1941
The Rev. A. P. Hassell—Stated Supply .....	1941 (May)
The Rev. D. Ralph Freeman .....	1941-1944
The Rev. J. H. Gruver—Temporary Supply .....	-1944
The Rev. C. B. Ratchford—Temporary Supply .....	-1945
The Rev. John C. Neville .....	1946-1950
The Rev. Andrew I. Keener—Temporary Supply .....	1950-1954
The Rev. R. Frederick Brown—Temporary Supply .....	1954-1955
The Rev. James Bruce Frye .....	1955-

CHAPTER ONE  
CAMP MEETING TIME  
1797 - 1859

Before the formal organization of a Presbyterian Church in Mills River in 1859, the cause of Presbyterianism waxed and waned in Mills River for over sixty years.

Col. James Brittain, a Revolutionary soldier, whose home was in the Mills River section, set aside ten acres of his homeplace to be used for community and school purposes, on which a small log building was erected in 1797.

The Rev. David Haddon taught here in what was the first known school in the territory which later became Henderson County. Tradition holds that the Rev. Ephraim Bradshaw, a Presbyterian minister, frequently itinerated to Mills River and held worship services for all denominations in the old Log School.

It was not until 1828 that a Presbyterian Church was formally organized in the vicinity, this taking place at Davidson River, twelve miles to the west of Mills River. In its early years this church served as the headquarters for Home Missionary activity in what is now Henderson and Transylvania counties. The Rev. Christopher Bradshaw was the first pastor of this church, serving from its organization until 1841. In a report of the early history of the Davidson River Church, it states:

"Bradshaw began to look about for mission work. He began a mission on Mills River . . . In October 1828 he held a camp meeting at Mills River, when eleven members were received on profession of faith. These camp meetings were continued from 1829-54, with more or less regularity and with gratifying results. Not one meeting passed without additions on profession of faith."

Presumably these camp meetings were first held in the log school, until a more adequate building replaced it in 1830. This new building, called the Mills River Academy, was a two-story frame structure, with the lower floor used for school purposes, and the second story serving as a church auditorium. This was built as a result of the deeding of the land where the log school had stood by Gen. Philip Brittain, son of Col. James Brittain, to five trustees: John Murray, John Clayton, John Johnson, John Woodfin, and John Miller. The deed was made on November 14, 1829, and is recorded in Book 20, page 149, Buncombe County. It stated:

"In consideration of the promotion of literature and for administration of the preaching of the Gospel . . . and for the purpose of a meeting house to be free for all orderly preaching of the Gospel of every denomination, provided that nothing here-

in mentioned shall obstruct the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Presbyterian denomination on their notified or appointed day — and also for the purpose of a school house free for the reception of this and adjoining neighborhoods whose parents may feel disposed to contribute to the support of the teacher and for no other purpose. . . .”

Because of the camp meetings held here by Christopher Bradshaw and others, the tract of land on which the school was built became known as the "Camp Ground."

Not only did this building serve religious and educational needs, but frequently served political and judicial needs as well. After Henderson County was created, the building was used in 1839 for sessions of the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions.

While Gen. Brittain showed preference for the Presbyterian denomination in the use of the church facilities, there was apparently little need for such designation, because there is no record of the Baptists making any use of the facilities, and little record of the Methodists using it, both of these denominations having their own buildings, or acquiring them shortly after this date. This building was recognized by many as "The Presbyterian Church."

During this period a schism developed within the Presbyterian denomination, chiefly over the question of union with the Congregational Church, but also widened by dispute over doctrinal issues and the slavery question. The more liberal pro-union faction became known as the "New School" Presbyterian Church, and the more conservative anti-union faction was known as the "Old School" Presbyterian Church.

The effect of the New School-Old School controversy was felt within the Davidson River congregation, and split the church to such an extent, that in 1859 that church was virtually extinct. The Rev. William Graves, a New School minister, and pastor of the Davidson River Church, apparently changed his stand in this controversy, and asked to be transferred from Union Presbytery, N. S., to Concord Presbytery, which was Old School in affiliation. Graves was received into Concord Presbytery on April 15, 1859, and as a consequence of his transfer, together with a like change in feeling of two of the three members of the Davidson River Church, that church closed its doors.

CHAPTER TWO  
THE BIRTH OF A NEW CHURCH  
1859 - 1861

Many of the members of the Davidson River Church were residents of the Mills River Community, and in their desire to revive an interest in the church, they felt more inclined to concentrate their efforts in their own community rather than at Davidson River.

This interest resulted in the organization of two Presbyterian churches in Mills River in 1859 within three months of each other. The New School Church was the first to organize, doing so June 10-13, 1859. The official record of that church reads as follows:

"Whereas the Davidson River Church has become extinct, as an organized body, in consequence of the pastor and a majority of the Session, viz. James Killian and Jacob Summey having joined the Old School,

And whereas a majority of the said members of said church, wish to retain their connection with Union Presbytery, N. S.,

Therefore Union Presbytery was requested by the said N. S. party to send some minister or ministers to investigate the case.

In compliance with said request Rev. Messers Wm. H. Smith and N. Hood were appointed by the Missionary Committee of Presbytery to visit said congregation at their earliest convenience.

June 10

"In compliance with said appointment Rev. Wm. H. Smith arrived at Mills River and commenced a sacramental meeting aided by Rev. Jac. Hood, Rev. N. Hood having been detained by Sicknys.

June 11

"After careful investigation it was ascertained that the following individuals previously members at Davidson River Church wished to be organized into a church and retained under the care of Union Presbytery known as Mills River Church—viz.

Turner Williams	Sarah Clayton
Ruth Williams	C. C. Clayton
Mary J. Williams	Robt. Orr
Franklin Byers	Hanah Rhodes
Juda Byers	T. C. Allen
Jno. Osborne	R. M. Miller
Rebecca Osborn	S. S. Anderson

Nancy A. Osborn	June Hood
Teresa Burgin	Mary Anderson
Wm. L. Murry	Wm. Anderson
Nancy Harrison	Elizabeth Clayton
Joseph Garren	Rebecca Bryson
Mary Garren	Hulda Barnet
Nancy Israel	Margaret Kimsey
Elizabeth Allen	Margaret Orr
Harriet Becknel	Margaret H. Hood
Lea Brittain	Margaret Lytel
Elvira Brittain	

June 12

"After communion the Congregation went into an election of Ruling Elders under the direction of Rev. Wm. H. Smith, Rev. J. Hood being requested to act as Clerk pro tem, which resulted in the election of Turner Williams, Wm. L. Murry & Wm. Anderson, John Murry having died previously.

June 13

"Messers T. Williams & Wm. Anderson having signified their acceptance of the office of Ruling Elders in the newly organized church at Mills River were ordained thereto after sermon by Rev. Wm. H. Smith. Mr. Wm. L. Murry postponed his ordination for further consideration.

The newly ordained Session having met, Rev. J. Hood acting as Moderator, T. Williams was chosen Clerk of Session. The Session then adjourned.

SIGNED: J. Hood, Clk. Pro tem."

After the organization was completed, the Rev. Jacob Hood was called to serve as Pastor of the Church.

Meanwhile the Old School Presbyterians were making plans of their own for an organized church in Mills River. In answer to their request, a Commission of Concord Presbytery, consisting of the Rev. R. H. Chapman, the Rev. G. D. Parks, and Ruling Elder A. T. Summey, came to Mills River and organized an Old School Presbyterian Church on September 12, 1859.

The names of the following charter members are recorded:

Jacob Summey	William Brittain
Mary R. Summey	Rachel Brittain
George Summey	Rebecca E. Greer
Elizabeth Summey	Mary E. Brittain
Julius A. Corpener	William S. M. Johnson
Bertha E. Corpener	Francis M. Brittain

Langdon C. Summey	Rachel C. Brittain
Martha A. Summey	Sarah Bryson
Laodicia Davenport	William H. Graves
Martha L. Davenport	Mary A. Graves
Mary Sitton	W. M. M. Graves
Nancy Murray	Margaret St. Clair Carson
Elizabeth E. Murray	Martha St. Clair Murray
Matilda M. Murray	G. E. M. Bennick
Davie H. Murray	Robert McLean

Jacob Summey, who had been an Elder in the Davidson River Church, was elected as the first and only Elder of this new church upon its organization. As the only Elder, he naturally served as Clerk of Session, and the Rev. George Dickinson Parks, a member of the organizing commission of Concord Presbytery, became the first pastor of the church.

Now that two Presbyterian Churches existed in a community where none had existed short months before must have presented some problems to these Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. Which church would have preference in the use of the second-story sanctuary of the Academy in keeping with the terms of the deed by Gen. Philip Brittain, which stated that "nothing . . . should obstruct the preaching of the Gospel and administration of the Presbyterian denomination on their notified or appointed day—"?

We should hope that our fathers exercised good Christian grace to work out a mutually satisfactory arrangement. There is no record available of what arrangement, if any, was agreed upon, but if there was a conflict at this point, we can imagine that the New School brethren held an advantage. This is due to the fact that Mr. Hood, pastor of the New School Church, was also Headmaster of the Academy at the same time, and he surely had a key to the building.

Whatever the arrangement for the use of the building, it must have been used and felt to be vital to community welfare, for in that same year the frame building was replaced by a brick building of similar arrangement, with the school downstairs, and church upstairs.

The brick for the new building was made by James King and his slaves who lived at Kings Bridge on the French Broad River, one mile south of the Academy. Ben King, who owned the farm in 1868, had two Negro men, Josh and Henry, who made the brick for the present Mills River Methodist Chapel, built in that year. Josh molded and fired the brick, and Henry, a splendid mason, did all the brick work.

The use of the sanctuary was not the only problem confronting the two congregations concerning property loosely designated "for Presbyterian use". In 1852, seven years before any Presbyterian Church existed in Mills River, James Brittain deeded one and one-half acres of land to

John Osborne, Julius Corpening, and Turner Williams, Trustees, "Designated expressly for the use and benefit of a Presbyterian ministry."

Again, the New School Church apparently enjoyed the advantage in the use of this property, since two of the three trustees became members of the New School Church, and Mr. Hood, the New School Pastor, lived in a manse on this property while serving in Mills River.

Whatever ecclesiastical and theological differences existed between the two congregations in their formative years, soon became secondary in a larger cause that united them in the common struggle for Southern independence.

CHAPTER THREE  
THE WAR YEARS  
1861 - 1865

During the Civil War the two congregations continued to be served by their original pastors, at least on a part-time basis. The Rev. G. D. Parks served the Hendersonville Church in addition to the Mills River Church.

Few records exist today of either of the Mills River Churches and their life during the critical war years, so that we can only conjecture from later records as to what took place during this period. A look at the history of our denomination during this period will also assist us in piecing together the puzzle of how these two congregations became one church, to remain so to this day.

When the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church USA (Old School) met in May, 1861, all the Southern states had seceded from the Union except North Carolina and Tennessee. These two states seceded during the meeting of the General Assembly. The Gardiner Spring Resolutions were introduced at the Assembly calling for the Church to promote and perpetuate the United States, and to encourage and support the Federal Government. These resolutions were adopted by the Assembly, but protested by the Southern Commissioners who argued that the Assembly had no right to take a stand in political issues, especially those that would make church membership contingent upon such a stand.

As a result of this action of the General Assembly, forty-seven Southern Presbyteries seceded, and in a meeting in Augusta, Georgia, on December 4, 1861, the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America was organized. This church is known today as the Presbyterian Church in the United States. It remained for the Southern Churches of the New School affiliation to be organized into the United Synod of the South.

The New School-Old School differences seemed to resolve themselves during the war years and these two bodies united into one denomination in 1864. Though union was consummated on the denominational level, it was not always quickly effected on the local level. Disruption of the lines of communication, and the otherwise general state of confusion resulting from the war, was partly responsible for the slowness of local congregations of the two schools to unite.

This seems to have been true in Mills River. There is no record of a formal union between the New School Church and the Old School Church in Mills River. The records that still exist indicate that members of the New School Church began gradually to unite with the Old School Church until the New School congregation was absorbed and ceased to exist. The death knell of the New School Presbyterians in Mills River

sounded when the Rev. Jacob Hood, though no longer Pastor at Mills River, was received into the Old School and became a member of Concord Presbytery on October 3, 1866.

Thus the two little congregations became one church, the Mills River Presbyterian Church, in Concord Presbytery, in the Synod of North Carolina.

While the union of these two churches was important to the people involved, and to this history, the big event that involved every man, woman, and child in America those years was the Civil War. Just how the Presbyterians of Mills River and Henderson County reacted to this catastrophe in its early days is indicated by a letter from an anonymous correspondent to the *Southern Presbyterian*, a church newspaper published weekly in Columbia, South Carolina:

Hendersonville, N. C.

May 13, 1861

"Dear Presbyterian:

Yesterday (the Sabbath) I was an interested witness of a most touching scene; and as there it contained in it much of example, I will describe it for the benefit of your many readers.

You all know that North Carolina is, politically, fairly aroused, and this village and county are not backward in their good work.

Several companies have been organized and the "Henderson Guards", under the command of Capt. Shipp, are now enroute to Asheville.

Of the ninety men which compose this company, only two or three are married men. The remainder are hearty, vigorous, young mountaineers. Eager, impetuous, daring, we would as soon see their own mountain torrents stayed and driven back to their sources as these mountain boys return defeated or dishonored.

But our hopes do not lie altogether in the might of their arms, the strength of their purpose, or even the justice of their cause.

These youths are the very jewels of the county; the sons of praying mothers, they are sent forth in tears, their commission baptized by prayer.

Let us give you an instance to which we first alluded.

Yesterday, a few of them were assembled at their Bible Class when the leader of the class and their minister (Dr. Parks of the Presbyterian Church in Hendersonville) waiving the cus-

tomary lesson of instruction, arose; and after a few impressive words of warning, encouragement, and direction, presented each of them with a Bible, given by the female members of the class. We will not soon forget the affectionate tenderness, the earnest treaty, of their beloved teacher and pastor, as he besought them to make the precious gift 'the man of their counsels'; and not thrill at the picture of *true* bravery which he presented in the Christian character, bearing unmoved the jest of the scoffer, or firmly defending, as a true soldier of the cross, the principles of truth, and of the freedom by which 'Christ maketh His children free.'

It was no shame to the manhood of these young patriots, that their tears mingled with those of the congregation who had assembled for afternoon worship; and as the voice of prayer arose, every heart was lifted with its full burden of tearful petition to that God who has promised to hear and answer. Can a cause watered by such tears, baptized by such prayer, be unholy? If we believe that the spirit dictates prayer, must we not believe that God *will*, that he does, ~~hear~~ us? As we looked upon these young men accepting, with bowed heads and overflowing hearts, the sacred gift of their young companions we felt that they *could not* be conquered, and our faith gave us this promise: 'He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.' Indeed, the whole of that hundred and twenty-sixth Psalm seems to be peculiarly applicable to us at this time, for surely we have been 'like them that dream', for 'the Lord hath done great things for us.'

Have you time for more?

Let me tell you something of the women of Hendersonville.

The call came suddenly to them that these volunteers were to be equipped for the field. Matrons and maidens, the old and the young, vied with each other who should give the most assistance. Uniforms, shirts, knapsacks, even tents were to be made, and to avoid serving on the Sabbath, these wives and daughters of Hendersonville (God bless them!) denied themselves natural rest, and worked faithfully, cheerfully, earnestly, till every soldier was supplied.

We believe women delight in works of supererogation, for not content with their severe work, they resolved their volunteers should not leave them without a flag. The resolve was action, and in an incredibly short space of time a flag, beautiful in its simple chasteness was prepared.

On a field of white, fifteen blue stars, (emblematic of the fifteen southern states) radiate from a centre, forming one large

star. On the reverse side is worked in blue and white: 'To the Henderson Guards. Follow Your Banner to Victory or Death.'

To understand all the patience, the resolution, the earnestness, involved in this gift, one has to understand the adverse circumstances under which the banner was executed.

It is impossible to obtain in a country village necessary materials for such an object.

Failing to get one article, another was substituted, till their perseverance and industry were at length rewarded by the perfect execution of a chaste and beautiful flag.

They are worthy to be the sisters, the wives, of patriots, and many a prayer for the safety and defense of the beloved ones over whom that banner shall wave was stitched in with tears which gathered, but never blinded the loving eyes that so faithfully worked for brothers or friends.

Prayerfully and tenderly it was given, firmly and gratefully accepted, and we will know *that* banner will never be forsaken or dishonored.

They have gone — they left this afternoon. It was a sad and solemn parting, but our confidence in them anticipates a bright and honorable career, and our faith bids us hope a speedy and safe return."

CHAPTER FOUR  
THE STRUGGLE OF RECONSTRUCTION  
1866 - 1889

Though Presbyterianism was stronger in Mills River as a result of the union of the two congregations, the post-war years, with its economic depression, and other attending difficulties, made growth for the young church a formidable task.

The Church could not support a minister, and was dependent upon Presbytery to provide supply ministers as regularly as possible. Under this arrangement the Church rarely had more than one worship service a month. It is possible that this was supplemented by the Rev. William Graves, former pastor at Davidson River, who had bought some land in Mills River in 1857, and built a house, and continued to live in the community until his death in 1896 at the age of ninety-five. His son, Captain William H. Graves, was killed in action near Petersburg, Virginia, in 1864, and is buried in the Church cemetery alongside his father.

To facilitate administration and promote church extension, the part of Concord Presbytery, roughly sixty miles east of Charlotte to the western end of the state, was organized into Mecklenburg Presbytery in 1869. Under the new organization the Mills River Church was served for three years by the Rev. J. C. Carson, a Home Missionary, who had supplied the Church for a year during the war.

In 1871, Dr. Richard Henry Lewis, a West Point graduate, came to Mills River to teach school. He records that he boarded with the Rev. William Graves for a year and a half. — "Here we lived in a little log house 12 x 18 feet." This house was on the property now owned by J. Ed Brown.

Dr. Lewis bought twenty-one acres of land from Captain Erwin Posey in 1872, and built a house, where he and Mrs. Lewis, who had come to be with him, lived and taught school for several years. This land was later sold to the Presbyterian Church.

Apparently the Church was without a regular pastor from 1872-1876. In that latter year, the Rev. W. H. Davis, a native of Salisbury, North Carolina, came to Mills River to serve the first of two pastorates at this Church, the second pastorate served from 1907-1914.

Mr. Davis was born on August 11, 1845, and before his twentieth birthday, he, like so many other young boys of that era, became a man before his time because of the war. He enlisted in Ramsey's Battery of the 10th Artillery CSA, and was captured in his first action near Amelia Court House, Virginia. He was interned for the duration at Point Lookout Prison, Maryland, and was discharged on June 12, 1865.

That fall he enrolled at Davidson College, and after graduation in 1869, he entered Union Theological Seminary, then located at Hampden-Sydney, Virginia. He was licensed and ordained by Mecklenburg Presbytery and served churches in the mountain area of Jackson, Haywood, Cherokee, Clay and Macon Counties. After two years at Mills River, Mr. Davis became pastor of the Sharon Church in Charlotte, North Carolina.

By sharing a pastor with the Hendersonville Church, the Mills River Church was able to secure a successor to Mr. Davis rather rapidly. The Rev. Stephen Taylor Martin, a native of Richmond, Virginia, came to Henderson County in 1878 and served as Pastor of the two churches until 1884.

Mr. Martin was a graduate of the University of Virginia, and of Union Theological Seminary in the class of 1860. He served in the Confederate Army throughout the war, attaining the rank of Captain. Before coming to Henderson County he had served as Headmaster of schools in Statesville and Charlotte.

Though the church records for this period are lost, correspondence from the Mills River Church to the *North Carolina Presbyterian*, and published in *The Southern Presbyterian*, March 20, 1879, seems to indicate that with the coming of Mr. Martin life began to be generated in the Church really for the first time. The account reads:

"We are in the midst of a precious season of grace. The Holy Spirit has descended upon us with power. Already thirty-five persons have been brought so directly under the influence of the Spirit as to be led to seek pastoral advice and counsel. Among these are many of the people of God and some back-sliders who had brought reproach upon the Church and had for years been cut off from its communion. At our sacramental occasion on last Sabbath four united with the Church on profession of faith, and yesterday twelve were taken under care of the Session for instruction, oversight, and future examination. Nearly all of these are cherishing a hope in Christ, others are awakened and others are believing whose affinities will lead them to other denominations. New cases of interest and fresh triumphs of grace are occurring every day."

During Mr. Martin's pastorate the Church bought its first piece of property; twenty-one acres purchased from Richard H. Lewis and Ella B. Lewis for \$600. The deed was made to F. M. Brittain, J. Tyler Williams, and James Osborne, Deacons of the Mills River Church, on July 15, 1881. Though no record is available of the church disposing of this property, the record is on file of the Church acquiring this same twenty-one acre tract in 1895 from Mr. J. Sol Fanning. Tradition records a manse built on the southwest corner of this tract of land, and which burned in 1905.

Mr. Martin resigned his pastorate in 1884 to assume the work of financial agent of Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia. After his leaving, the church was without a regular pastor for almost five years. This lack of leadership resulted in dwindling interest and activity within the Church to the point that in 1888 the Mills River Church reported only one Elder and thirty-six communicant members on roll.

One bright spot in this era, and indeed in the entire history of the Church, was the sending of the first missionary from the Mills River Church in the person of Miss Elise Virginia Lee, who, in 1887, went to Mexico and served there under the Board of the Presbyterian Church for fifty years.

CHAPTER FIVE  
THE TURN OF THE CENTURY  
1889 - 1916

Technically speaking, the turn of the century from the old to the new, occurs at the stroke of midnight on December 31st of the ninety-ninth year. However, the years immediately preceding and following that hour are not unimportant, and could themselves be called the turn of the Century. Those years, specifically 1889-1916, were, in the Mills River Church, years of new life and growth commensurate with the symbolic newness of the twentieth century.

The Rev. Frank Dean Hunt, another Richmond, Virginia, native, became Pastor of Hendersonville and Mills River in 1889. This was his first pastorate after ordination in November of the same year. During Mr. Hunt's ministry a new work was begun at Midway, up Boilston Creek. This work developed into an organized church in 1894, known as the Midway Presbyterian Church. The Rev. E. A. Sample, who succeeded Hunt in 1892 as Pastor at Hendersonville and Mills River, was instrumental in bringing about the organization of the Midway Church, and served as its first pastor in the capacity of Stated Supply.

Not only was the Church extending beyond its bounds, but it was also growing in Mills River at a good rate under the leadership of Messers Hunt and Sample. Over one hundred per cent increase in membership took place in seven years, with the minutes in 1895 showing eighty communicant members on roll, with four elders and three deacons in office.

On December 2, 1896, under the leadership of the Rev. R. F. Campbell, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Asheville, the churches of the eleven western counties of Mecklenburg Presbytery, and correspondingly of the State of North Carolina, were organized into Asheville Presbytery.

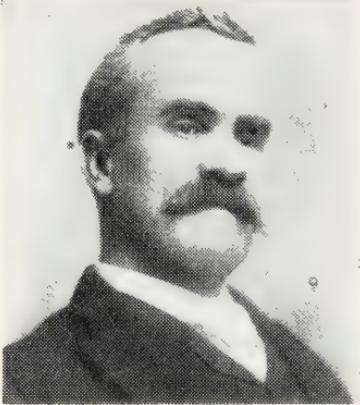
This action was taken so that closer attention could be given to developing the vast Home Missions opportunities in the mountain region. This region, with a population of 140,000, had only fifteen Presbyterian churches, and ten ministers. These churches, with a total membership of 853, were widely scattered, and were justified in feeling themselves to be "the backyard of Mecklenburg Presbytery."

Although it was a Home Mission Church, Mills River was the second largest church in the newly-organized Asheville Presbytery.

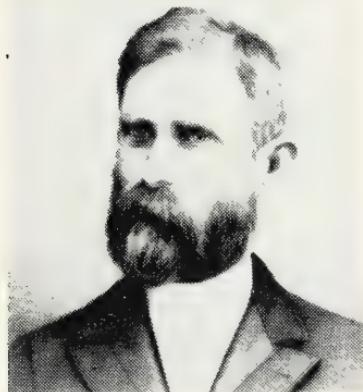
During the ministry of Mr. Sample the Mills River Church had its first member to become a candidate for the Gospel ministry. Mr. W. W. Williams was preparing for the ministry at Louisville Theological Seminary, where he graduated in 1898, although there is no record of his ever having been ordained as a minister.



The Rev. W. H. Davis  
1876-1878  
1907-1914



The Rev. Frank Dean Hunt  
1889-1892



The Rev. E. A. Sample  
1892-1896



The Rev. Hinton R. Overcash  
1899-1901



The Rev. Charles C. Brown  
1902-1906

In 1896 Mr. Sample resigned his pastorate at Hendersonville and Mills River, and this brought to an end the arrangement of the sharing of a minister between the two churches.

Being unable to support a minister full time, an arrangement was worked out between Mills River and the Rev. J. L. Wicker, who was serving Brevard, Davidson River and Midway Churches. This pastoral relationship continued until 1899, when the Mills River and Midway Churches extended a call to the Rev. Hinton Raleigh Overcash, Pastor of the Swannanoa Presbyterian Church.

Mr. Overcash was born in Statesville, North Carolina, on February 22, 1867, and was a graduate of Davidson College and Union Theological Seminary in the class of 1896. He accepted the call to Mills River and Midway after having served the Swannanoa Church for one year.

Home Missions in Asheville Presbytery was on the move under the able leadership of the Rev. R. P. Smith, and the Mills River Church became the center of home mission activity in Henderson County. The Preston Church, above Midway, on Boilston Creek, was organized and Mr. Overcash assumed pastoral leadership of the new church, in addition to the Mills River and Midway Churches.

The report of the Home Missions Committee to a meeting of Asheville Presbytery in 1901 notes three significant home mission activities closely related to the Mills River Church:

"At Upper Mills River a good building is in process of erection, and the general outlook is hopeful. . .

"At Mill Pond the people have subscribed money and donated land, lumber and labor for a building. The lumber for framing has been cut, and work on the building will begin in the near future.

"At Midway . . . the Pastor advises the removal of the church building to Ettewah (sic!) Station on the H. & B. RR, where it will be nearer the centre of the congregation. A lot has been offered in case of removal."

The building at Upper Mills River was never completed, and no church was ever organized there. The framing from the uncompleted building was later used in the construction of a new manse at Mills River in 1915.

The Midway Church was moved to Etowah in 1904, and the name was changed to the Etowah Presbyterian Church.

During the pastorate of Mr. Overcash, the church continued to grow, although it was not without its financial difficulties. An Every Member Canvass was not a common practice in those days, nor were the women generally accepted in the courts of the church, but an event of prophetic

importance occurred in the church about this time. The minutes of the Session records that a committee of four ladies was appointed by the Session to visit the members of the congregation and raise the deficit in the pastor's salary!

Mr. Overcash resigned his pastorate in 1901, and the Rev. L. L. Carson served as Temporary Supply until 1902, when the church called the Rev. Charles Connor Brown, a recent graduate of Louisville Theological Seminary. Mr. Brown, a native of Charlotte, North Carolina, served the Mills River and Etowah churches until September, 1906.

Mr. Brown was very active in the work of Asheville Presbytery and was honored by that court by being elected its Moderator in April 1904, and being elected Commissioner to the General Assembly the same year.

While Mr. Brown was pastor, the manse, which had served the church for over twenty years, burned down. This loss, coupled with the growing dissatisfaction in the use of the Academy facilities, presented the church with a two-fold building project; the replacement of the manse, and the building of a sanctuary. The building of the church took precedent, and on December 5, 1905, Mrs. Martha C. Reid deeded one-half acre of land to J. T. Osborne, W. A. Brittain, W. A. Osborne, and T. T. Carson, Trustees of the Church. The deed reads in part:

" . . . Whereas Martha C. Reid has determined to donate to the said Mills River Presbyterian Church, free of any pecuniary consideration whatever (excepting nominally one dollar); but out of the consideration, purely and alone, of love for the cause of Christ, and the furtherance, and early and final establishment of His church and the Kingdom of God in general, the following lot of land; . . . "

Nine months after the land was acquired for the building of the church, Mr. Brown terminated his relationship as pastor at Mills River. Without a manse the church had difficulty in securing a minister, but even without pastoral leadership, plans for the building of the church continued. The Fulton Fund, amounting to \$1,000, had been left with the Home Mission Committee, to be used for the building of a church at Mills River. The Committee made it somewhat difficult for the church to use the money, however, by making it a challenge fund, requiring the church to raise \$500 before the proceeds of the Fulton Fund would be granted to them. The church accepted the challenge and raised the \$500, and also sold five acres of land to Jess C. Barnett for \$100. This money, together with the Fulton Fund, enabled the Church to begin construction on their sanctuary. As the work progressed additional money was needed, so fifteen more acres of land was sold to Mr. Barnett in March 1907.

In this same year the pastoral services of the Rev. W. H. Davis were acquired. Mr. Davis was serving as Pastor at Davidson River, Stated Supply at Etowah, and Temporary Supply at Preston. He had been

Pastor at Mills River from 1876-1878, and now for the second time he was called to lead the church. He became Stated Supply at Mills River in 1907, a relationship that continued until 1914.

Construction on the new church continued, and in 1908 the building was completed, and still stands today serving the cause of Christ in the Mills River community. The dimensions of the original building were approximately 36' x 45', and originally had a pebble-dashed exterior, which was later brick-veneered.

Eager to show off their new building, the Session invited Asheville Presbytery to meet in Mills River in the Spring of 1909. Presbytery met for the first time in the new church on April 27th. Members of Presbytery were entertained in the homes of the congregation, the meeting lasting three days and two nights.

Meanwhile, the people at Mill Pond (now the Rugby Community) had built their church, and named it Lane's Chapel. On September 19, 1909, with fifteen charter members they were organized into the Oak Dale Presbyterian Church. The charter membership consisted of two members from the Hendersonville Church, three received on profession of faith, and the following members dismissed from the Mills River Church: Misses L. Cora Summey, Dosia E. Brittain, Augie M. Corn, and Messers G. C. Summey, W. D. Miller, W. L. Miller, A. T. Kimsey, and Mesdames W. L. Miller, T. D. Brittain, and Sallie T. Rogers.

The Oak Dale Church never did thrive, and some years later it was dissolved. In 1957 the building was torn down and sold for scrap, and the Home Mission Committee instructed the Session of the Mills River Church to sell the property for the Committee and retain the proceeds from the sale. The bell from the Oak Dale Church was moved to Mills River before the building was razed.

In 1912 the Mills River Church reported ninety-eight members on roll, making it the fifth largest church in the Presbytery. Though this church continued to grow, another of the recently organized Home Mission Churches met its demise. The Preston Church was dissolved in 1912, with the remaining members being recommended to the Etowah Church. This left only four Presbyterian Churches in Henderson County, of which only three still exist today: Hendersonville, Mills River and Etowah.

During the years of Mr. Davis' pastorate, and again in 1920-1923, the Home Mission Committee employed seminary students to assist with the work at Mills River and the other churches in the field. Among those serving during these years were: Lowry Davis, J. Q. Wallace, Robert King, "Bully" McQueen, Billy Reviere, George Rector, Sidney Davis, Marion Huske, and Tom Currie.

With the resignation of Mr. Davis in 1914, the church began to consider the building of a manse. On June 9, 1915, the Henderson County

Board of Education deeded two plots of the "Old Camp Ground" land to the Mills River Presbyterian Church; one consisting of five acres, and the other of one and one-half acres. It was decided to build a new manse on the smaller of the two lots. Construction was begun in that year and completed in 1917.

During the latter part of this era, there was a growing feeling in the Presbytery that they were isolated from the center of activities of the Synod of North Carolina, and that there was a lack of understanding of the problems peculiar to the mountain region by the rest of Synod. Similar feelings were expressed about their respective Synods by the churches in the mountain areas of Eastern Tennessee and Southwestern Virginia. Negotiations were begun that culminated in the organization of the Synod of Appalachia, composed of four Presbyteries, and covering the mountain regions of the aforementioned states, as well as a small section of Kentucky. The Synod of Appalachia met for the first time on November 2, 1915, in the First Presbyterian Church of Bristol, Tennessee, with Dr. R. F. Campbell, a leader in the organization, elected as the first Moderator.

Thus the Mills River Church, which had been in the Presbyteries of Concord, Mecklenburg, and Asheville, all in the Synod of North Carolina, was now in the Presbytery of Asheville in the Synod of Appalachia, where it has remained until this day.

With the fairly rapid turnover of ministers that the Church had during this era, the people were about to enter into a new and glorious experience, a pastoral relationship that was to continue with slight interruption for twenty-three years.

CHAPTER SIX  
BELOVED PASTOR — DEVOTED FRIEND —  
CHRISTIAN SERVANT  
1917 - 1940

The words above appear on a memorial plaque in the sanctuary of the Church to the memory of the Rev. William Samuel Hutchison, and describe the impression that he left upon the church during his long and faithful ministry. The story of the Mills River Church during these years is in large measure the story of Mr. Hutchison and his life.

At his funeral service on June 1, 1940 great tribute was paid to the memory of Mr. Hutchison. One of the ministers who participated in the service, The Rev. Dumont Clarke, wrote a memorial which was published in the *Christian Observer*, and reads as follows:

"A great debt of gratitude for the life of Rev. W. S. Hutchison who, at the age of sixty-two, was called into the presence of his Lord in May, 1940, leads the writer to prepare this memorial. For more than ten years, a unique relationship—one that brought the writer into the intimacy of the home and into the welcome of his churches and his people in the parish — gave unusual insight into the life of a singularly devoted and useful minister of Jesus Christ.

Mr. Hutchison, a graduate of the University of South Carolina, served the Mills River, Etowah and Davidson River group of churches, as his only pastorate, for twenty-three years. To his funeral service a great company came together from the whole community and from distant places. His ministry was beautifully characterized at this service by Dr. R. F. Campbell, pastor emeritus of the First Presbyterian Church, Asheville; excerpts from those words follow:

'Mr. Hutchison had won for himself a place of esteem and affection in the hearts of all who knew him. He was a model pastor. He preached the Gospel, not only from the pulpit but from house to house. His own life was a living epistle, known and read by all. He was a good shepherd. He knew the members of his flock and was known by them. He led them in green pastures and by the still waters. They heard his voice and followed him, for his was not the voice of a hireling or a stranger, but of their beloved pastor. He was also a model Presbyter. He was regular in his attendance on the meetings of Presbytery and Synod, and faithful in the performance of his duties on the committees of which he was a member.'

Mr. Hutchison was a man of unshaken and unshakable faith, The Christian hope was the anchor of his soul, both sure and



THE REV. WILLIAM SAMUEL HUTCHISON

1917 - 1920

1923 - 1940

steadfast. But the outstanding characteristic of his life was love. He loved the Lord his God supremely, and he loved his neighbor as himself. He was gentle, patient, affectionate, and charitable in his judgment of others. He was greatly beloved because he was loving and lovable. He was a great Christian.'

It was the inestimable privilege of the writer, from the very beginning of the interdenominational 'Lord's Acre' movement, to have the advice and gain the support of Mr. Hutchison in connection with this work; and to the end of his life he contributed immensely to the advancement of the movement among country churches.

Progressive in his spirit, Mr. Hutchison saw in the 'Lord's Acre' plan a means to enable those who otherwise could not give money, to have a worthy part in Christian stewardship. He believed in the plan as a means to help train the children in Christian stewardship. 'For the children's sake,' he would say, 'For the children's sake, we must advance this work.' Nowhere were the children enlisted more effectively and directed in their 'Lord's Acre' projects with more helpful words than in Mr. Hutchison's fields. The writer can never be grateful enough for the wise advice, the encouragement and continued support of this servant of God with his fine mind and great heart.

So gentle and humble was Mr. Hutchison that he could hardly believe that his work was counting with large effectiveness for the Kingdom. However, he had raised up many men and women, faithful, capable workers, serving in his own churches and going forth to serve in other churches. Consequently, the expressions of gratitude from Dr. Campbell, who had received many of the members from the Mills River field into the First Presbyterian Church in Asheville, and who knew that other churches likewise had been so benefited, were an inspiration to Mr. Hutchison and a great tribute to his work.

The spirit of the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hutchison was unusually beautiful. Always there was the most cordial welcome to those who came to its hospitable fireside or guest room. To have shared the gracious Christian fellowship of Mr. and Mrs. Hutchison, to have gained their wise counsels, to have exchanged Christian experiences with them, and to have known the loveableness and strength of their Christian faith, is an abiding and precious blessing.

Expressive of the esteem in which Mr. Hutchison was held by his people are these statements: 'Words cannot express how much we miss Mr. Hutchison.' 'No pastor of any denomination has ever done nearly so much for our community.' The children loved him so. Sadness was evidenced among them when

school began this fall without his usual opening words of advice and prayer.' Before he died a city pastor spoke an earnest word to him, expressive of the estimation of all his fellow pastors: 'Mr. Hutchison, you are my ideal of a country church pastor.'

The memory of this devoted and capable servant of his Master will ever be cherished by those who were privileged to have his counsel, fellowship, and friendship, and by all to whom he ministered."

Mr. Hutchison served his entire ministry at Mills River, save for three years, 1920-1923, when he was Assistant Superintendent of Home Missions for Asheville Presbytery. In addition to the Mills River Church, he served at various times as pastor of the Oak Dale, Davidson River, and Etowah Churches. He and Mrs. Hutchison were the first occupants of the new manse that was built in 1915.

Guiding the Church through the difficult depression years, the most significant program initiated by Mr. Hutchison was the addition of an educational unit consisting of five Sunday School rooms, built in 1930-32, at a total cost of \$4,500. The building committee for this project was appointed December 9, 1929, and consisted of O. W. Lancaster, L. L. Burdin, and J. D. Osborne.

In the spring of 1935, Taylor O. Bird, a member of the church was received under the care of Asheville Presbytery as a candidate for the Gospel ministry. Mr. Bird is now serving as an ordained minister in our Church.

CHAPTER SEVEN  
THE LAST TWO DECADES  
1940 - 1959

In the death of Mr. Hutchison the Church sustained a great loss. Without the stabilizing influence of a permanent pastor, and soon to be confronted with the critical years of World War II, difficult days lay ahead for the Mills River Church.

The Rev. C. B. Ratchford, who was to supply the Church on several different occasions, became Temporary Supply in 1940 and served until the Rev. A. P. Hassell was employed as Stated Supply in May 1941. Dr. Hassell was a former missionary to Japan, who had rendered distinguished service to Christ in that country. His ministry in Mills River was short-lived, however, culminating in his sudden death less than one month after his employment by the Church.

Again Mr. Ratchford served temporarily until the Rev. D. Ralph Freeman, Pastor at Draper Valley, Virginia, accepted the call to come to the Mills River Church. Mr. Freeman also served the Etowah Church, and services were held in each church on alternate Sundays, as had been the custom for a good many years.

The church operated under great handicaps due to the war, not the least of which was the lack of young manpower in the church because so many men were called to serve in the armed forces of their country. One of these, Gordon Fowler, was reported missing in action in April 1944, and reported dead in April of the following year.

Mr. Freeman's two sons, Robert and David, who were members of the church during their father's pastorate here, are now ordained ministers in the Presbyterian Church U. S.

In their search for a new Superintendent at the Mountain Orphanage, the Home Missions Committee looked to Mills River, and in 1944 Mr. Freeman was called to fill that post.

That same year the Church bought 1.15 acres of land from Mrs. French Reid Kimzey for \$115. This land adjoined the church property to the southeast, and was purchased with a view to building a manse there in the future.

The church was served in 1945 and 1946 by the Rev. J. H. Gruver, and once again by the Rev. C. B. Ratchford, both on a temporary basis. In 1946 the Rev. John C. Neville came to Mills River as Pastor after serving during the war as a Chaplain in the United States Army. The previous arrangement of sharing a pastor with the Etowah Church was continued under Mr. Neville. Whereas two preaching services a month had seemed adequate in years past, the lack of services every Sunday made it difficult



The Rev. D. Ralph Freeman  
1941-1944



The Rev. John C. Neville  
1946-1950



The Rev. Andrew I. Keener  
1950-1954

to create and continue a well-organized program. The lack of full-time pastoral attention resulted in poor financial support, and an otherwise general lessening of interest in the church by her people. An encouraging sign, however, was noted in the increasing interest in youth work. Frequently the young people of Mills River outnumbered all the other churches of the Presbytery in attendance at conferences and rallies. One of the young people, John C. Neville, Jr., was received as a candidate for the Gospel ministry during his father's pastorate at Mills River, and is now serving as an ordained minister of our denomination.

In February 1950, Mr. Neville accepted the call to become pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Andrews, North Carolina. At the end of his pastorate the records at Mills River showed 112 communicant members on roll, with five Elders and nine Deacons in office.

Shortly after Mr. Neville left, the church secured the services of the Rev. Andrew I. Keener, as Temporary Supply. Dr. and Mrs. Keener were living in retirement in Brevard, after serving as missionaries of the USA Church in Puerto Rico. His last pastorate before retirement was in East Liverpool, Ohio. In June 1950, Dr. Keener became supply pastor on a regular basis, a relationship that continued until the summer of 1954, just before the death of Mrs. Keener.

Although he lived in Brevard, Dr. Keener maintained close contact with the church, and led the people in a progressive program. The manse was sold in the summer of 1951, and plans were laid for the building of a new manse adjacent to the church. On Homecoming Day, October 11, 1953, groundbreaking exercises were held, and construction was begun shortly thereafter. The manse was built at a cost of \$13,500, and was of brick-veneer construction. Almost as a throwback to the old two-story days of the Academy, the manse was designed with the basement to be used as the Fellowship Hall of the church.

Musical interest was revived in the church when the services of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Trefois were secured in March 1952. The Trefois' had moved to Hendersonville after his retirement from the United States Army Band in Washington, D. C. Mrs. Trefois was approached to provide music for the Easter services that year. What began as a temporary arrangement, developed into a lasting one that has continued for over seven years.

Under Mrs. Trefois' leadership an Adult Choir was organized, followed shortly thereafter by the organization of a Junior Choir. In April 1953, a Wurlitzer electric organ was purchased to replace the old pump organ that had served the church for so many years. Musical highlights of the church have been the annual programs at Easter and Christmas presented by the combined choirs of the church.

Certainly the efforts of Mr. and Mrs. Trefois and the choirs of the church have contributed much to the growth and renewal of interest in the church evidenced in recent years.



THE REV. JAMES BRUCE FRYE

1955 -

In January 1951, Mr. and Mrs. Rufus C. Morrow united with the Mills River Church upon retirement as missionaries of our Church to Mexico. Mrs. Morrow, sister of Mrs. H. N. Clark, one of our members, died later in that year, and Mr. Morrow has since served another short term as missionary to Mexico.

In 1954, another missionary family, the Rev. and Mrs. E. H. Gartrell, Jr., and their five children came to live in Mills River during their first furlough from service in West Brazil. Before their return in April 1956, their oldest son, Richard, united with the Mills River Church on profession of faith.

The presence of these missionary families in the church, enhanced the understanding and support of the people in the world mission of the Church.

The new manse was completed in the spring of 1954, and with that as a strong selling-point, the church began its quest for a regular pastor. The Church was being served at this time on a temporary basis by the Rev. R. Frederick Brown of Asheville.

In January 1955, Mr. J. Bruce Frye, a Senior at Union Theological Seminary, accepted the call of the Mills River Church, and in May of that year he and Mrs. Frye moved into the new manse as its first occupants. In the first service of its kind ever to be held in the church, Mr. Frye was ordained to the Gospel ministry on July 24, 1955, and installed as the first full-time resident pastor in the ninety-six year history of the church.

Mr. Frye was born in Asheville, North Carolina on November 23, 1930, and grew up in the First Presbyterian Church of that city. He was educated at Davidson College, and graduated from Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, in the class of 1955, after having served one year as student pastor of the Westminster and Berea Churches near Wilson, North Carolina. His wife, the former Miss Frances Clark of Fayetteville, North Carolina, was a graduate of the Assembly's Training School in Richmond, Virginia, in the class of 1953.

The church was still being supplemented by Home Mission funds, but plans were made for the church to assume an increased share in the pastor's salary annually, so that beginning with the one hundred and first year in the life of the church, it could become a self-supporting church.

The church was ready to grow, and with full-time pastoral oversight, regular worship services were held, and an adequate program was being developed in the church. This resulted in new growth that has been unparalleled in its history. In 1955 the church reported a membership of 106. In the first four years of Mr. Frye's pastorate sixty-three members have been added to the church, twenty-eight of these upon profession of faith.

The church was able to utilize this new manpower, and in November 1957 three additional Elders and five additional Deacons were elected, and after intensive training by the pastor, and examination by the Session, they were ordained to their respective offices in the spring of 1958.

Coupled with the growth in membership was an increase in the stewardship of the church. In 1954 the church gave to all causes \$2,148. In 1959 the giving to all causes will be in excess of \$10,000. Approximately 25% of the total receipts has been given to the benevolent work of the Church. A systematic debt retirement plan was worked out, and the mortgage on the manse was liquidated in March 1959.

With the church out of debt, and facilities becoming inadequate, a Planning Committee was appointed to investigate the building needs of the church. The Committee is still at work, and their efforts should culminate in a building program in the near future.

Mr. Frye became active in the work of Presbytery and Synod, and is serving on several committees of these two courts. In 1958 he was elected a commissioner to the General Assembly, meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina, and at present is Moderator-Elect of Asheville Presbytery. In 1959 he was elected President of the Henderson County Ministerial Association.

The Centennial Year has lent added emphasis to the evangelistic and stewardship programs of the church, and in the spring of 1959 a committee was appointed to plan for the celebration of this significant occasion in the life of the church. The Centennial Committee consists of John H. Osborne, Albert F. Holden, L. L. Burgin, J. Trigg Brittain, Norman Guice, W. H. Lashley, Jr., Mrs. B. D. Phillips, Mrs. W. A. Porter, Mrs. J. G. Betts, Mrs. J. Bruce Frye, Miss Mary Beth Key, and Mr. Frye.

Their untiring efforts have resulted in a week of special services, September 7-13, with preaching nightly by former pastors of the church, and sons of the church now in the ministry, together with many other added attractions, and climaxed on Homecoming Day, September 13th by the presence of the Rev. E. T. Thompson, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

In recounting the one hundred years of service that the Mills River Church has rendered to Christ and the community, one can only rejoice in the deep spiritual quality of the lives of many of its members and leaders too numerous to mention in this brief account, but whose names are recorded in the Book of Life. In looking to the past we gain courage to face the glorious opportunities that the future holds in store for the Mills River Presbyterian Church.







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UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
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Frye, J. Bruce/The Mills River Presbyter



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Frye, James Bruce.  
The Mills River Presbyterian Church.

FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS ON BOOK POCKET

DUE	INITIALS AND SURNAME	CAR.
OCT 12 20	mending	

REGULAR LOANS  
(3 WEEKS)

1. Sign both cards with initials and surname.
2. Leave both cards (signed) at desk.
3. Before leaving desk, secure DATE DUE CARD and place it in this pocket.
4. A charge will be made for overdue books.

RESERVE BOOK LOANS AND CARREL LOANS  
APPLY AT DESK

BORROWERS MUST BE REGISTERED  
PLEASE REPORT CHANGE OF ADDRESS

